

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5784
INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
AMCONSUL AUCKLAND

UNCLAS WELLINGTON 03306

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SUBJECT: COMMUNICATION AND COOPERATION WITH APCAC

REF: SECSTATE 112598

1. THIS MESSAGE IS A JOINT EFFORT OF EMBASSY WELLINGTON AND CONSULATE GENERAL AUCKLAND.
2. AS NOTED IN REFTTEL, AMCHAM NEW ZEALAND IS NOT A MEMBER OF APCAC. THIS REFLECTS A CONSCIOUS DECISION BY AMCHAM NEW ZEALAND. IT IS ROOTED IN THE FACTS THAT THE LOCAL AMCHAM'S CORPORATE MEMBERSHIP CONSISTS ROUGHLY 50/50 OF AMERICAN AND NEW ZEALAND FIRMS, AND THAT THE INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE ACTIVE IN AMCHAM AFFAIRS ARE MORE NEARLY 10-TO-1 NEW ZEALAND NATIONALS. AMCHAM NEW ZEALAND FOCUSES AS MUCH ON EXPORTING TO THE USA AS ON IMPORTING FROM IT, AND TOPICS SUCH AS SECTION 911 AND EXPROPRIATION WHICH EXCITE AMCHAMS ELSEWHERE ARE OF LIMITED INTEREST HERE.
3. AMCHAM NEW ZEALAND IS A DELIBERATELY LOW-PROFILE
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ORGANIZATION, SERVED BY A PERMANENT SECRETARIAT CONSISTING OF ONE FULL-TIME AND ONE PART-TIME EMPLOYEE. IT HAS THREE BRANCHES. THAT IN CHRISTCHURCH HAS, HOWEVER, HAD MINIMAL ACTIVITY. THE GROUP IN WELLINGTON HAS NOT IN THE PAST BEEN AS ACTIVE AS IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN, BUT HAS STEPPED UP ITS PACE RECENTLY, PARTLY AND INDIRECTLY IN REACTION TO INITIATIVES TAKEN BY THE EMBASSY. FOR EXAMPLE,

LATELY THE WELLINGTON BRANCH HAS BROUGHT TOGETHER A GROUP TO SEE A RECENTLY-RECEIVED VTR ON ECONOMIC POLICY, MET WITH A VISITING AMERICAN PROFESSOR OF LABOR RELATIONS, AND HOSTED A SMALL RECEPTION FOR VISITING COMMERCE DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY MORAN. WE ARE ENCOURAGING SUCH ACTIVITIES AND WILL CONTINUE TO SHARE IDEAS, MATERIALS, AND VISITORS WITH THEM IN AN EFFORT TO INCREASE THE INTENSITY OF THEIR ACTIVITIES, AND TO BROADEN OUR OWN CONTACTS WITH THEM.

4. THE INCREASED AMCHAM ACTIVITY IN WELLINGTON IS ALSO, IN PART, A REACTION TO THE MORE ACTIVE PROGRAM CARRIED ON BY THE AUCKLAND BRANCH. THAT GROUP HAS EXERCISED CONSIDERABLE INDEPENDENCE OF THE WELLINGTON HEADQUARTERS, ALTHOUGH ITS ACTIVITIES HAVE BEEN RESTRICTED LARGELY TO A SERIES OF MORE-OR-LESS MONTHLY BREAKFASTS, LUNCHEES AND DINNER GATHERINGS, OFTEN BUILT AROUND THE VISIT OF A VIP FROM OVERSEAS. HOWEVER THE AUCKLAND BRANCH HAS SHIED AWAY FROM GETTING INVOLVED IN SUBSTANTIVE ECONOMIC OR TRADE MATTERS EVIDENCING A CLEAR PREFERENCE FOR AVOIDING CONTROVERSY AND BEING PLACED IN THE LIMELIGHT.

5. ON TRADE PROMOTION, HOWEVER, AMCHAM HAS BEEN HELPFUL. IT SUPPORTS OUR TRADE EXHIBITIONS AND OTHER PROMOTION ACTIVITIES IN NEW ZEALAND, MAKES ITS NEWSLETTER AVAILABLE FOR OUR PURPOSES WHEN NEEDED, AND IS UNCLASSIFIED

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COOPERATING WITH US IN THE UPDATING OF THE AGENCY INDEX FOR NEW ZEALAND.

6. WE HAVE JUST PROPOSED TO THE AMCHAM EXECUTIVE MANAGER THAT WE UNDERTAKE A COOPERATIVE STUDY OF THE COMPETITIVE POSITION OF THE U.S. VERSUS OTHER MAJOR SUPPLIERS TO THE NEW ZEALAND MARKET. THERE IS STILL PREPARATORY GROUND-LAYING TO BE DONE BEFORE THE PROPOSAL IS PUT FORWARD TO THE CHAMBER'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS, BUT WE EXPECT THAT AS LONG AS THE REVIEW IS DONE QUIETLY (WHICH SERVES OUR PURPOSES AS WELL AS THEIRS) THEY WILL BE WILLING TO PROVIDE SOME ASSISTANCE. WE WILL CONTINUE TO SEEK OUT OTHER WAYS IN WHICH OUR TIES WITH AMCHAM, HERETOFORE LARGELY SOCIAL AND COMPLETELY CORDIAL, CAN BE BROADENED TO INCLUDE A LARGER MEASURE OF SUBSTANTIVE CONTENT. SELDEN

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